

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PORT O 01158 191504Z

46

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-10 SPC-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-03 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 DRC-01

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R 191430Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5630

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT OF SPAIN 1158

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, TD

SUBJECT: ANNUAL PARTY CONVENTION

REFTEL: POS 1134

1. SUMMARY: THE UPCOMING ANNUAL CONVENTION OF T&T'S RULING PARTY WILL TAKE PLACE AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF CONSIDERABLE FERMENT BOTH WITHIN ITS RANKS AND IN THE COUNTRY AT LARGE. THE CONVENTION SHOULD SET THE TONE FOR THE ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES EXPECTED IN THE COMING YEAR AND DEMONSTRATE THE DEGREE TO WHICH PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS CAN DOMINATE THE PARTY. IT MAY ALSO GIVE A CLUE TO HIS PLANS FOR HIS SUCCESSION. END SUMMARY.

2. THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL RULING PEOPLE'S NATIONAL MOVEMENT (PNM) CONVENTION SEPTEMBER 28-30 WILL BE EAGERLY WATCHED FOR INDICATIONS OF THE GOTTS REACTIONS TO THE COUNTRY'S INTERNAL WOES (POS 1122) AND PLANS FOR THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION AND NATIONAL ELECTIONS GENERALLY EXPECTED IN EARY 1974. ALTHOUGH LAST YEAR'S CONVENTION WAS DOMINATED BY WILLIAMS' BLASTS AT "FOREIGN INTERFERENCE", HE CAN HARDLY AVOID DEALING MORE DIRECTLY WITH HIS OWN PROBLEMS THIS YEAR.

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PAGE 02 PORT O 01158 191504Z

3. BOTH THE PARTY'S POLITICAL LEADER (WILLIAMS) AND PARTY CHAIRMAN (PREVATT) ARE UP FOR REELECTION FOR 5-YEAR TERMS, ALTHOUGH WILLIAMS SO FAR HAS NOT COMMITTED HIMSELF PROBABLY IN AN ATTEMPT TO PROVOKE HIS BEING DRAFTED BY ACCLAMATION. KARL HUDSON-PHILLIPS' ABORTIVE EFFORT TO OPEN UP THE CONVENTION THROUGH A CONTESTED ELECTION FOR PARTY CHAIRMAN GAINED A GOOD DEAL OF SUPPORT WITHIN THE PARTY AMONG THOSE WHO SEE PNM POWER AND INFLUENCE DIMINISHED BY ITS FOSSILIZATION. WILLIAMS' REJECTION OF HUDSON-PHILLIPS' BID INDICATES THAT HE INTENDS TO CONTINUE HIS IRON DISCIPLINE IN THE PARTY. HOWEVER, THERE IS A CHANCE THAT THE DISCONTENT OF A SIZEABLE PORTION OF THE PARTY WITH THE WAY THINGS ARE GOING MAY SURFACE AT THE CONVENTION.

4. PERHAPS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT OUTCOME OF THE CONVENTION MAY BE CLUES AS TO WHAT PLANS WILLIAMS MAY HAVE FOR HIS EVENTUAL SUCCESSION, FOR THE TRANSFER OF POWER TO A NEW POLITICAL GENERATION CANNOT BE POSTPONED INDEFINITELY. DESPITE CONSIDERABLE EVIDENCE THAT HE IS FED UP AND WANTS OUT, HE IS TOO CONCERNED WITH HIS PLACE IN HISTORY TO LEAVE NOW UNDER FIRE AND BEFORE CONSTITUTION REVISION AND HIS VINDICATION IN CONTESTED ELECTIONS (THE OPPOSITION BOYCOTTED THE 1971 CONTEST). AFTER YEARS OF CUTTING POTENTIAL OPPOSITION OFF AT THE KNEES, WILLIAMS FINDS HIMSELF WITHOUT HEIR APPARENT, SCANT TALENT TO PLAY WITH, AND THE BEGINNINGS OF RESTLESSNESS IN THE PNM RANKS. ALL IN ALL, IT SHOULD MAKE FOR A LIVELY CONVENTION.

MARSHALL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 SEP 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: hilburpw
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973PORTO01158
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS MARSHALL
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: PORT OF SPAIN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730924/aaaaarod.tel
Line Count: 88
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: EL: POS 1134
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: hilburpw
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30-Jan-2002 by martinml>; APPROVED <31-Jan-2002 by hilburpw>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ANNUAL PARTY CONVENTION
TAGS: PINT, TD
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005